

Gardening Newsletter

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Plant garlic, stake crops, trap pests

With the colder weather this week some gardens may get overnight frost, which means fall really is here. If you were holding out hope of more tomatoes, peppers, etc. ripening on the plants I think it is safe to say that the season is over. Mature tomatoes that have turned from dark green to lighter green will continue to ripen fully off the vine, however, so it is not the end of your fresh tomato eating. Store the unripe tomatoes and peppers in flats or boxes one layer deep, not touching (to avoid one spoiled fruit infecting another) in dark, cool (10-15oC/50-60oF) conditions. Bring them out to ripen at room temperature on your windowsill as you need them.

Here are some things to do in October, when you can find a dry day to do it:

Plant garlic: Choose a well-drained place that has not had any onion family plants (including leeks, shallots, etc.) growing there for the last 4 years. While this is the wrong time of year to apply manure or soluble fertilizers to the soil (nutrients, especially nitrogen, leach away in the winter rains). You can use finished compost to enrich your garlic plot because the action of micro-organisms in the composting process makes nitrogen less soluble. Also, if the soil pH is low, mix in agricultural lime before planting the garlic. Later on, when it gets cold, apply a nice thick mulch of leaves to the garlic bed. And if see garlic shoots poking up in mid-winter, don't worry! The shoots are very hardy and will be fine.

Get a soil test: Now is a great time to get a pH test for your soil to find out whether or not you need to add lime to the soil. The testing labs are less busy and this is also the best time to apply lime to the garden (though it can be applied any time of year). Send or take your soil sample to an actual soil testing laboratory and don't rely on kits or pH testers from the garden centre, which are not at all accurate. Brief instructions for soil sampling are on the MB Labs website: <https://www.mblabs.com/tools-information/how-to/how-to-take-a-soil-sample.php> and available from extension department on OSU or WSU web sites.

Stake up plants: A priority should be staking plants easily toppled by high winds or heavy wet snow with gusty winds predicted this week. This includes the cabbage family plants, such as Brussels sprouts, cabbage and big old summer broccoli plants, all of which are very top heavy by now. Although winter broccoli and cauliflower plants are smaller right now, they also need to be supported to prevent stems from being broken or plants uprooted. For the largest plants, such as tall trunks of Brussels sprouts, you might need to pound in substantial posts. For smaller plants, driving in 3 or 4 bamboo stakes around the stem of each plant works very well; tomato cages are also useful if you can fit them over the plant without breaking leaves. To wiggle a tomato cage over a winter broccoli, for example, wrap the plant in a tea towel to pull the leaves together before sliding the tomato cage over the plant.

Put up sticky bands for Winter Moth: (Canadian) Thanksgiving weekend is good timing to band trees where there were a lot of winter moth caterpillars feeding in oak, apple and other deciduous trees last spring. In late fall the moths emerge from their cocoons in the soil to mate and lay eggs. Sticky bands intercept the female winter moths, which can't fly, before they can walk far enough up the tree to lay their eggs at the ends of the branches. Banding kits are available from suppliers or you can easily make the bands. Get insect glue at a garden centre and spread it on any kind of banding material, about a foot

wide, that is waterproof enough to withstand a few months of rain: Handiwrap, cellophane, poly plastic or heavy plastic packaging tape. For trees with deep grooves in the bark, wrap a layer of cotton batting around the trunk first and push it into the crevices to prevent moths from crawling under the band, then wrap the band on top of that. The band can be anywhere on the tree trunk so place them high enough off the ground to be out of the way. Take bands down in late January-early February.

Keep trapping SWDs: After an entire summer free of spotted wing Drosophila in my garden, I finally started catching adults in the third week of September. I am now catching 50-100 per day in my one vinegar trap. These are likely the big hatch of adults from the wild blackberries thickets in the neighbourhood. Last winter I trapped SWD all winter, catching over 6000 adults to the end of January when it turned really cold. The cold should have killed them, but I continued to catch low numbers of females until the first of April. I think it may be well worth it to start trapping now and just leave the traps all winter. Dump out the mess and change the vinegar every few weeks or monthly. For what SWD look like in the vinegar see; <http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/borers.html#95> . For instructions on how to make a simple trap, see my June 14, 2016 message on my garden tips page: http://www.lindagilkeson.ca/gardening_tips.html If you were plagued by high numbers of fruit flies in your kitchen or hovering around your compost bin this fall, that is a different species from SWD and not the ones you will catch outdoors in your vinegar trap.